



COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION
of Middlesex County

Competitive Grant Guidelines And FAQs

This guide is designed to maximize your organization's chances of receiving a grant from the Community Foundation. It includes information on the grant process, eligibility requirements, what we are most inclined to fund, what we will likely decline, and specifics about what is required in all grant applications.

Before you begin the application, we recommend that you read this guide carefully. Chances are that your questions will be answered in these pages.

After reading this guide, if you have questions, please contact Thayer Talbott at Thayer@MiddlesexCountyCF.org or 860.347.0025.

ELIGIBILITY:

- Grants are awarded to 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organizations and 170(c)(1) governmental agencies serving the various communities of Middlesex County.
- Grants will be awarded to organizations that provide positive impact on the community within the areas identified below and will be a minimum of \$500.
- Applications from previous grantees are welcomed. While we consider applications for continued support of previously funded programs, we cannot guarantee funding will be awarded.
- Submissions of interim status reports or final evaluations from previous grants are required prior to submitting an application. Final Evaluation Forms are available on the CFMC website. Interim Status Report Forms are available by contacting Thayer Talbott at 860.347.0025 or Thayer@MiddlesexCountyCF.org

FUNDING LIMITS AND APPLICATION FORMS:

- The Community Foundation reviews requests for grants up to \$5,000.
- Grants are designated as
 - "Small" - Funding Requests up to \$1,000
 - "Traditional" - Funding Requests above \$1,000 and up to \$5,000
- Two (2) grant applications are available on the Community Foundation's website, one for "Small" grants and one for "Traditional" grants. Each application type has certain requirements for submission, **please be sure to read the Application Instructions Document on our website to understand the submission expectations.**
- All organizations submitting an application must attend one of the Community Foundation's Competitive Grant Application Information Sessions. These sessions are held during July and August and dates are posted on the Community Foundation's website.
- Organizations may submit one application per cycle. Only complete applications with all questions answered and the required attachments will be reviewed.
- **"Small Grants" Applications** are submitted online via the Community Foundation's website.
- **"Traditional Grants" Applications** are submitted online via the Community Foundation's website. Organizations are also **required to submit two (2) signed hard copies** of the submitted application, with all attachments, **within seven (7) days of the submission date.** Hard copies may be mailed to **Community Foundation of Middlesex County, 49**

Main Street, Middletown, CT 06457, or delivered to the Community Foundation office at 49 Main Street, Middletown. Unfortunately we cannot accept handwritten or faxed applications.

3 YEAR GRANT POLICY: The Community Foundation instituted a “*three-year-grant / one-year-off*” policy, in which agencies **receiving** grant awards in **the competitive process** for three (3) consecutive years will not be eligible for a grant award in the fourth (4th) year and may not submit an application during that cycle. *Note: This policy applies **only** to grants received during a **competitive grant cycle, regardless of funding source.***

“WHAT DOES THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION SUPPORT?”

The Community Foundation is particularly looking for grants that add value to, and have a positive impact on, the health and vitality of the Middlesex County community. Grant proposals should address a need and demonstrate impact on the organization, project, community, and/or persons served. We fund a wide range of programs that address community needs and create opportunities for enhancing the quality of life for all in Middlesex County, including, but not limited to:

- Community Enrichment (Arts/Culture/Heritage)
- Economic Security/Opportunity
- Economic Development
- Education (Community Wide/Schools)
- Public / Social Benefit (Civic Improvement/Social Services)
- Community Health (Health/Medical/Hospital Care)
- Environment
- Animal Welfare and Protection
- Recreation

The Foundation seeks applications that possess some of the following elements:

- address a documented need or concern within an area of interest;
- build the capacity of community organizations and/or programs that help individuals to help themselves;
- foster cooperative approaches to community issues through collaborations based on shared visions and mutual responsibility;
- serve as a catalyst for attracting other funding resources; and
- build infrastructure within the organization in order to meet its mission.

“ARE THERE CERTAIN REQUESTS THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION WILL NOT FUND?”

Normally, the Foundation will not award grants to:

- Organizations that, in their constitution, bylaws or practice, discriminate against a person or group on the basis of age, race, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation or identification, political affiliation, or religious belief;
- Programs or materials that would normally be included in the regular operating budget for schools;
- Municipal/government agencies for programs or materials that would normally be part of their regular operating budget;
- Fund debt reduction or debt retirement;
- Endowments, reserve funds, capital campaigns, or annual fund drives;
- Fundraising event sponsorships or creation of fundraising event collateral materials;
- Religious or political purposes;
- For the purpose of re-granting;
- Activities, projects, or programs that will be completed before funding becomes available (in general, no retroactive funding); or
- Staff positions for which long-term funding has not been established or planned.

Grants will not be made to individuals, political organizations and campaigns, or for the purpose of lobbying.

SOME GENERAL FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

“OUR GRANT REQUEST LAST YEAR WAS TURNED DOWN, WHY?”

Please remember that it is discouraging to have to say “no” to good people doing great things. Applications are usually not turned down because they are “bad” applications. Occasionally, an application will fall outside the bounds of our guidelines and the Committee(s) will find itself unable to help. (Please read the guidelines carefully before you invest the time and energy in making an application.) But generally, it is a case of the competition being very tough. It is an annual occurrence to receive far more requests than our grant budget allows us to provide in grants.

“DOES THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO WILL BE AFFECTED BY A GRANT MATTER?”

Yes, but not always. It is certainly something that the Committees consider but our efforts to get a good “bang for the buck” are measured qualitatively as well as quantitatively.

“SHOULD WE HAVE A PROFESSIONAL GRANT WRITER PREPARE OUR APPLICATION?”

It’s not necessary. We have simple applications and those who read them are more interested in the reality of the need and the quality of the plan for addressing it than in the elegance of the grant request language. It’s ok to use a grant writer, just not necessary.

“IS YOUR GRANT MAKING STRICTLY RESPONSIVE TO REQUESTS YOU RECEIVE OR DO YOU UNDERTAKE INITIATIVES?”

For the most part, our grant making is responsive. We believe that a strong community must have all the elements of arts, education, natural spaces, basic needs programs, animal welfare, social benefit, and more to thrive. To determine one area of funding over another to be most important is contrary to our philosophy and culture. We review data surrounding needs and expect our nonprofit applicants to be able to adequately address their role in fulfilling a need in the community, not duplicating services, and providing value for the programs they provide. However, we do look for opportunities to bring organizations and businesses together to collaborate on addressing specific issues within our community, and when possible, we help facilitate specific initiatives to improve the quality of life for all within Middlesex County.

“DO YOU AWARD GRANTS TO THE GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION WHERE YOUR DONATIONS COME FROM?”

When a fund is established, if the donor asks that distributions from the Fund go to a certain geographic area or field of interest, that’s where those grant dollars go – forever. Otherwise, it is our general believe that the needs of our community do not end or begin at a town line and that the needs of our neighbors are our own. Many of our donors have established unrestricted funds in order to benefit all the communities in Middlesex County through our competitive process, rather than a single town or group of towns or narrow field of interest.

“IF A NONPROFIT HAS AN ENDOWMENT WITH THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION, WILL IT AFFECT OUR CHANCES OF RECEIVING A GRANT?”

No. Having an endowment with the Community Foundation has no bearing when it comes to receiving a grant. If you have an endowment with us but your organization needs a grant, go ahead and apply if you wish. You will be on even footing with all our other applicants.

“HOW DO I KNOW WHICH APPLICATION FORM TO SUBMIT?”

We implemented a two-tiered application format in 2018. Tier 1 applicants are organizations applying for \$1,000 or less and should use the online “Small Grants” Application form; Tier 2 applicants are organizations applying for grants over \$1,000 up to \$5,000. This application is also available online but has certain submission requirements; please be sure to review the instructions document.

However, there are certain questions an organization should answer before beginning an application form to determine eligibility:

To determine if you are **eligible to submit the online “Small Grants” Application**, you **must** answer **YES** to **all** of the following questions:

- Is your request for \$1,000 or less?
- Have you applied to the Community Foundation at least once in the previous five (5) years?
- Is your tax exempt status in good standing with the IRS and have you submitted Form 990 annually and on time?

If you answered YES to all of the above questions, you may use the “Small Grants” Application online submission process on our website.

If you

- answered NO to any of the above questions,
- are a new applicant to the Community Foundation, or
- are requesting funding above \$1,000 and up to \$5,000,

then you must submit the “Traditional” Application found on our website. The “Traditional Application” is submitted online with two (2) signed hard copies submitted to our office within seven (7) days of the online submission.

If you have any questions regarding the Community Foundation of Middlesex County’s Competitive Application Process, or if you have any technical difficulties with the online application forms, please contact Thayer Talbott at 860.347.0025 or Thayer@MiddlesexCountyCF.org.